

the Surgeon-General's Office, the Adjutant-General's Office, Quartermaster-General's Office, or anywhere else where private justice was to be done to citizens, there was a deficiency of help, other help was got within the same Department by ordering clerks to be detailed. Now this spasm of so-called but very false economy, in my opinion, has cut down the general clerical force of the War Department within the last two or three years to a very large degree, and it has had its effect upon the capacity of the Surgeon-General's Office to get off the business.

Mr. WITHERS. The clerical force of the War Department has been cut down as a whole, but the clerical force of the Surgeon-General's Office, according to my recollection, and I am sustained in it by the recollection of other members of the Appropriation Committee, was not reduced; on the contrary, it was somewhat increased, and for the purpose of facilitating the examination of these pension claims. To that extent therefore I wished to say a word in defense of the democratic party, and the policy it has pursued, from the criticisms made upon it on the other side of the Chamber.

Mr. VOORHEES. Mr. President, I came in after this discussion commenced. I know nothing about any party aspects it has or can have, and in view of the interest that I think ought to be subserved, I care but very little. As a member of the Committee on Pensions, however, there has reached me a volume of information from various parts of the country that has impressed me most deeply of doing something to cure an outrage upon a most meritorious class of our citizens. There is such delay in regard to applications for pensions as amounts to a denial of justice by this Government—an absolute denial of what we pretend shall be extended to this class of citizens who are under our care. There is not a day that does not bring to me in my mail complaints well founded that I cannot respond to except by admitting that fact and saying to the writers that I have no power to assist them. I have gone to every place where these duties are to be performed, the Pension Office, the Surgeon-General's Office, and everywhere else, without the possibility of obtaining relief for these applicants; and I wish to say to the Senate this morning that this grievance has become so great that it would properly call for a committee of investigation to see whether these bureaus are doing their duty with the force at their disposal, or whether they really merit and require a greater force. If they require more force, the Congress of the United States ought to give it to them without one moment's delay and without any question upon the subject of economy. There is no economy like that of doing exactly our duty by our own people.

I have no practical remarks to submit this morning as to the mode of reaching this question; but while listening to the suggestions made by others the thought came into my mind that this matter ought to be investigated. When claims of pensioners are behind a year and a half or two years in their examination, the fact calls for an intelligent observation of the situation; and either the Committee on Pensions or a special committee ought to investigate the Pension Bureau and inquire as to the number of clerks, the force at their disposal, the condition of the business, whose fault it is, and so as to the Surgeon-General's Office. We could thus see whether they need more assistance, and if they do, give it to them; and if they do not, and are not doing their duty, let them be held to a strict accountability, for this is an absolute grievance to my personal knowledge that ought to be redressed.

Mr. BURNSIDE. Mr. President, in view of some remarks which dropped from the Senator from Indiana in reference to the action of the Pension Bureau and the Surgeon-General's Office, I would say that I have had much experience in visiting those departments and looking after pension cases, and as far as my knowledge goes I feel that they are using due diligence and are using all the force in fact at their command for the performance of the work which properly falls upon them.

Mr. VOORHEES. If the Senator from Rhode Island will allow me, I wish to say that I have no reason to think otherwise than according to his statement, and had no intention of saying that they are not doing their duty fully.

Mr. BURNSIDE. I so understand the Senator from Indiana. I merely make this remark in view of the fact that I have been impressed with the belief that they are using the force to the best of their ability. I know of this evil probably more than any other Senator. There is hardly a soldier from any State of the Union but writes to me daily on this subject, complaining of the delays in the settlement of their claims, and I think myself that if the matter was brought fairly before the two Houses of Congress members of both political parties would be willing at once to vote the necessary force required for the rapid prosecution of this work. These men should not be delayed any longer in getting their just rights, and I am sure there is no Senator within the sound of my voice who is in the least disposed to keep them out of their rights. I think a measure properly drafted would meet the approval of the entire Senate.

Mr. WINDOM. Mr. President, I wish to say a word in reference to the responsibility of the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate for this condition of things. I have sent for the record showing the exact facts in the case and will have it in a few moments, I presume. I am quite certain it will be found on investigation that the Senate Committee on Appropriations have no share in this responsibility, that they allowed for these two offices very nearly if not quite the number of clerks recommended.

I want to say furthermore in response to the remarks of the honorable Senator from Virginia [Mr. WITHERS] that I think the gentlemen representing another body who are charged with peculiar economy—and I have charged them with myself perhaps as much as anybody—were somewhat more liberal with reference to these two offices than to others. I think the cutting was not so severe either on the Surgeon-General's Office or the Adjutant-General's Office; but I think he will find when we get the facts which I have sent for that even in these offices there was a considerable cutting below the actual number required and even below the number reported by the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate. If I am wrong in that I shall correct myself when the facts are received.

The true explanation of the difficulty, I think, lies in the fact that there has been two severe cuttings throughout the Department, that there are not clerks there to perform the duty, and those needed were formerly assigned to duty from other branches. We have passed a provision in one of the appropriation bills authorizing a detail of clerks from other branches of the Department to perform the duties of the Surgeon-General's Office and the Adjutant-General's Office when required; but the trouble is that the reduction of force has been so great in all the bureaus that

there are no clerks to assign. I remember that when we agreed to that provision I thought it amounted to nothing, and I believe that was the general impression, because there would be no surplus of clerks in any direction that could be assigned to that duty.

I am extremely glad that the attention of the Senate has been called to this matter, and I hope the attention of the country will be attracted to it, so that when the next appropriation bill is before us we may allow to these offices all the force necessary. I was satisfied that the force was deficient long ago, but I was unable through any efforts I could make to get it any larger than it is. I am satisfied that that was the feeling of all the members of the committee of the Senate of both parties; that they were anxious to allow to these offices the full force necessary for the speedy transaction of their business. I want to say that that applies to every member of the Committee on Appropriations of the Senate, on both sides of this Chamber, and I think that, the attention of the country having been called to it, particularly that of Congress having been called to it this morning, we shall have but little trouble in the next appropriation bill in having such an appropriation as will bring up this work as speedily as it can be done. I hope so at any rate.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. Mr. President, my recollection as to the clerical force in the Pension Office and the Surgeon-General's Office is the same as that of several other Senators who have spoken, that there was no reduction, no less number given them than they had had. I notice my friend from Vermont [Mr. EDMUNDS] smiling, but I want to say a word now to him. I see from the House report in my hand, which I have sent for since this debate commenced—I have not had time to put my hand just on the exact place, but I know that I read it probably six months ago—the statement that one man, at least, by the name of Stiles, was detailed from the Pension Office to act as secretary or clerk for the republican congressional committee located in this city, and for eight months, my recollection is, the testimony states, the man drew his pay regularly from the Pension Bureau and did not perform a single hour's work in the Pension Office. Another man, whose name I forget now, was away from the office several months—Caffrey perhaps was the name—and there were three in all, I understand, from the force detailed for the purpose of running what was known as the national congressional committee in this city. A friend says, "of the republican party." No one would ever think for a moment that it would be of any other party, so it was hardly necessary for me to say of what party it was. I know, as several Senators have stated, that the Pension Bureau is far behind what it ought to be in the examination of cases.

The last report of the Commissioner of Pensions will show that even last summer, and especially the summer before last, as every summer, there is a set of men, from one to five, detailed from the office to go through the country, they say to hunt up fraudulent cases; but the testimony taken in this same pamphlet, to which I have referred, shows that, instead of the clerks detailed from the office hunting up fraudulent cases, the papers come back as a rule just as they went out, but these gentlemen go on pleasure excursions.

I am not speaking from any knowledge of my own; I am speaking from the evidence taken by what is known as the Jenks committee of the House.

Mr. EDMUNDS. What is that document? Please give its number and date.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. Forty-fourth Congress, first session, Miscellaneous Document, No. 93, of the House. I agree that there should be more attention paid in the Pension Office to requests from pensioners themselves. I do not complain of the want of answers to anything I have sent, for they generally come pretty promptly; but the answer is generally, "We are sixteen or eighteen months behind; we cannot examine cases as promptly as we should do." What I complain of is that, while that is the case, men are detailed from that office, as this report shows, for political purposes, and instead of working at their desks it is known that they are doing other work; and then in the summer details are made of gentlemen to go around the country for the purpose, as they state, of hunting up fraudulent cases; but very few are found of that class.

Mr. PADDOCK. I should like to ask the Senator a question. I inquire whether he makes that charge in reference to that description of details against the present administration of the Pension Office?

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. Oh, no; not the present administration.

Mr. PADDOCK. Or is it something antecedent?

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. Not the present officers of the Department. I do not think they have done it. This evidence was taken during the last Congress.

Mr. PADDOCK. From the general and sweeping character of the Senator's statement, the inference would be that it referred to the present administration of the Bureau.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. I have stated two or three times that this was in the Forty-fourth Congress, and I speak from the evidence in this pamphlet, not from my own knowledge. I know nothing of what was done last summer, but I believe the same details of clerks were made then to travel around through the country, and they were paid out of the Pension Bureau appropriations. It is a well-known fact that the man who went to Saint Louis in the whisky-fraud cases, a detective who went as it was said for the purpose of stealing papers or getting them in some way—I refer to the Babcock trial—was paid out of the funds of the Pension Office. We all know that to be a fact. Instead of the money appropriated for the office being expended for the payment of clerks doing its work, it has been spent in other directions. I believe the chairman of the Committee on Pensions stated in the Senate not long ago that last session that in his opinion one-fourth of the entire \$28,000,000 appropriated to that Department was fraudulently gotten out of it in some way by persons who were not justly entitled. From the examination I have made, I am almost led to say that the chairman was pretty nearly right when he made that assertion.

Mr. EDMUNDS. Mr. President, the Senator from West Virginia, in order to show that the wrongs to the soldier are not due to any lack of appropriations by Congress, says that here is a report of testimony taken by a committee of the House of Representatives which proves that one Stiles and some other people were detailed from the Pension Office in the year 1875 or 1876, or whatever the time was, for political purposes and were paid out of the public money. He says that no other party but the republican party would do that. It is not necessary to say that the democratic party would not do it. I think the Senator is perfectly correct about that. If the democratic party, according to

the ancient history of the Government, had possession of the Pension Office, then there would be no such detail; it would be the regular work of the bureau; nothing else would be done; and the history and the example of just this sort of evidence for the last twenty-five years before the war will bear out what I say, in round numbers. But that is a little wide of the mark.

The Senator undertakes to excuse a palpable and gross violation of duty by Congress that has been pointed out over and over again in respect to these matters by showing, if it is shown, which this paper does not show, that certain abuses exist; but the committee do not say that the evidence convinces them that there is any such fact, but they have reported the testimony of a witness. That is all there is in this particular document.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. The Senator will allow me to say that I think on the first page he will see that the committee say such was the proof.

Mr. EDMUNDS. We shall see—

Mr. Jenks, from the Committee on Invalid Pensions, submitted the following testimony and statement.

Well, here is the "statement."

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. Now, will the Senator read that sentence and say what it is?

Mr. EDMUNDS. "The pension service of the United States disburses annually \$30,248,660."

That is the first statement, and then it goes on. As the Senator says he could not find the particular passage that he was looking for, I do not know that I shall.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. Will the Senator just continue where he read from "Mr. Jenks submitted."

Mr. EDMUNDS. This must be what the senator refers to.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. No; you have got a page too far ahead.

Mr. EDMUNDS. Let me see. I think this must be what the Senator refers to:

"In the language of the late Commissioner, 'He and Stiles were so assigned, as that was customary, as understood by all parties, and hence was not considered improper.'"

That is, the statement that inasmuch as the democratic party could not borrow the whole bureau like the republicans, they borrowed here and there a member of it. But, as I was saying, this is very wide of the point we have under consideration.

The attention of Congress has session after session been called not only in respect of this particular Department, but other Departments of the public service where the rights of citizens were involved to the fact that this so-called economy was cutting down the force beyond the possibility of transacting the business of the Government in that prompt and efficient way that the public interest and private rights required. Now the Senator shows as an excuse for that, of a justification, or something, that some republican clerk under some republican Secretary, or two clerks or a half a dozen have been wrongfully taken out of the public service and applied to private purposes, and paid out of the public funds. I do not know whether that is true or not. If it be true, I venture to say that it was the duty of the House of Representatives on this evidence to have impeached any Secretary of the Interior, any Commissioner of Pensions, or any other officer of the United States who was guilty in a single instance of such conduct; and the fact that with such eminently patriotic bodies, as both Houses are nothing at all followed this statement apparently, furnishes pretty good evidence to me that when we get at the whole truth it would turn out to be different from this "statement," as it is called. But I do not care whether it is or not. That is not the point. If, as I say, any such thing occurred, it ought to have been punished promptly and severely; but I do not see that that puts bread into the mouth of the soldier who is entitled to it if he has been wounded or diseased in the service of the country, and I do not see that it is an excuse to us for so reducing the force as that what we have done amounts to leaving him to die in sorrow and misery before his case can be disposed of. That is the point.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. It will be recollected, Mr. President, that I stated that there was in my opinion great delay and too much of it in the Pension Bureau. I do not know whether it is the fault of the bureau, or whether it is the fault of having too few clerks, too little clerical assistance. I do not intend to answer that question, but—

Mr. SARGENT. Does not the Senator know that the force has been largely cut down within the last few years by Congress?

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. I think not.

Mr. SARGENT. I can show the Senator that it has been.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. My friend ought to be well posted, better than I, but I think he is mistaken in that.

Mr. SARGENT. The record shows that I am not mistaken.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. I have no objection to hearing it.

Mr. SARGENT. In 1875 the force of the bureau was 159, all told; in 1876, 169; in the bill for 1877, the estimate still being 169, it was cut down to 135; and in that for 1878 it was again cut down to 135, although the estimate was larger and the representations were that the extra force was absolutely needed.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. Will the Senator tell us how much the reduction is?

Mr. SARGENT. The difference between 135 and 169.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. Since when?

Mr. SARGENT. The present fiscal year and the last fiscal year.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. One hundred and sixty-nine.

Mr. SARGENT. From one hundred and sixty-nine down to one hundred and thirty-five.

Mr. DAVIS, of West Virginia. I have not a word to say against the figures the Senator presents, but I think there must be some error.

But while we are on this pension matter let me say that the evidence to which I have pointed is positive on the point that there were three different men detailed from that office, notwithstanding that its work was so far behind, to do other service; and for eight months, at a salary of \$100 a month, one man was paid who did no work whatever in the Department, but was detailed for the political duty I have spoken of. That fact cannot be got away from.

Now, if more assistance is needed in that office upon investigation, let us grant it. The delay is great, too great; there ought to be more promptness; and I believe to-day, if the force in the Department was promptly handled, we could in a great measure bring up the arrears. It has been the case for years, and yet we find each summer de-

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